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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8985
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1967
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5444
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 9038
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6614
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4429
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2420
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RANGOON 000295

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR CA/OCS/ACS/EAP; STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [CASC](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: AUNG SAN SUU KYI ADDRESSES DIPLOMATS AT
TRIAL; THREE DIPLOMATS MEET WITH AUNG SAN SUU KYI

REF: RANGOON 291 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: P/E Chief Jennifer Harhigh for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

Summary

1. (SBU) When the regime allowed foreign diplomats to attend the afternoon session of Aung San Suu Kyi's trial on May 20, ASSK briefly addressed the group from across the court room. She expressed appreciation for international support and a hope to meet later under better circumstances. International press corps representatives also attended the afternoon hearing. It was a bizarre session, with introduction via female models of two complete burkha outfits that Yettaw allegedly brought ASSK to facilitate her escape from an assassination attempt he envisioned. Following the proceedings, the Burmese Ministry of Foreign Affairs accompanied three diplomats, representing the Dean of the diplomatic corps (Singapore), the ASEAN Chair (Thailand), and the Presidency of the Security Council (Russia), to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi at her quarters on the compound of Insein Prison. Embassy recommends the Department issue a press statement; proposed text in paragraph 8. End summary.

Aung San Suu Kyi Addresses Diplomats

2. (C) Burmese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) officials informed diplomats early May 20 that they would be allowed to observe the afternoon session of the trial against ASSK later that day. Approximately 30 diplomats and 10 journalists attended (including five from the international press, among them AFP and Reuters). In a dramatic moment after the hearing concluded, ASSK turned to face the diplomatic corps, smiled, and said: "I am waiting for permission to come over to see you and shake your hands. If permission is not granted, I very much appreciate you being here and I thank you for your support." When it became clear authorities would not allow her to approach the diplomats, she added, "I don't think I will be able to speak with you but I hope to see you soon under better circumstances." Authorities made no attempt to interrupt her. ASSK appeared healthy, full of energy and in charge of her legal defense. Assembled diplomats, including Charge and chiefs of mission from

Australia, UK, France, Italy, Germany, Singapore, Nepal, and Egypt, rose to their feet when ASSK entered the courtroom in a spontaneous show of respect.

Select Diplomats Meet ASSK

13. (C) MOFA also made arrangements for Singapore Ambassador Robert Chua, Thailand Acting DCM Somjai Taphaopong, and a Russian embassy official -- representing the Dean of the diplomatic corps, the ASEAN Chair, and the Presidency of the Security Council, respectively -- to visit ASSK after the hearing at the guesthouse inside the Insein Prison compound where authorities are detaining her. (Note: Russian Ambassador Mikhail Mgeladze, who had attended the morning MOFA briefing, was conspicuously absent from the trial, sending a much more junior diplomat in his place. End note.) Ambassador Chua will give a readout of the meeting with ASSK the evening of May 20; details to follow septel.

14. (C) In briefing the diplomatic corps in the morning, MOFA Protocol DDG Myint Soe said that contrary to rumors, the Burmese government had not been behind Yettaw's incursion in order to "trump up" charges against ASSK. Such rumors were being spread by anti-government forces who did not want to see positive changes in U.S. policy toward Burma, he added. He reported that the decision to grant access to the trial and to ASSK personally was made by the Prime Minister late the night of May 19. Afterwards, he told us privately that the decision was likely made higher than the PM's level -- at

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"the very top" as he put it. He also told us that if things go "smoothly" and without disruptions, he hoped authorities would allow diplomats to observe the trial again in the future.

The Trial, Day Three: Bibles, Books and Burkhas

15. (SBU) Two witnesses appeared during May 20 proceedings. During the morning session, a police lieutenant testified about his search of Yettaw's hotel room and read a religious letter Yettaw had drafted to Senior General Than Shwe, which was taken from Yettaw's bible. In the afternoon, the police officer who investigated Yettaw's entry into ASSK's residence testified about the materials, including books and equipment, Yettaw had brought with him to ASSK's residence during his two visits. Stunned diplomats watched as two female MOFA staff members modeled full-length burkhas -- including head and face coverings and dark glasses -- that Yettaw delivered to ASSK. At Yettaw's prompting, his lawyer stated to the judges that Yettaw provided the outfits to help ASSK escape the country and evade an assassination attempt that Yettaw had foreseen in a vision.

16. (C) ASSK's personal attorney Kyi Win (aka Neville) approached Charge privately to suggest that the Embassy urge Yettaw to express to the court his sorrow for causing problems and to ask forgiveness. The Charge responded that the Embassy may not interfere in the legal proceedings involving a private U.S. citizen.

17. (SBU) Embassy Consul was present for both sessions of the May 20 hearing. He observed the courtroom was spruced up in preparation for the arrival of the dip corps and press. Authorities had posted new signs indicating seating areas for diplomats and journalists, implemented security procedures for screening vehicles and individuals, and issued identification badges. Consul was unable to speak with Yettaw or his doctors but was told by a police Special Branch officer that doctors would force-feed Yettaw if it becomes necessary. The next court session is scheduled for May 21; Consul plans to attend.

Proposed Press Statement

18. Embassy recommends the Department issue another press statement and offers the following proposed language:

-- The United States welcomes the decision by Burmese authorities to allow foreign diplomats and members of the press to observe today's trial proceedings against Aung San Suu Kyi, her two assistants, and American citizen John Yettaw.

-- We are pleased the authorities allowed several foreign diplomats to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi after today's hearing.

-- We hope it is a sign of Burma's willingness to heed the concerns expressed this past week by the international community, and we continue to urge Burmese authorities to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her fellow prisoners immediately and without condition.

Comment

19. (C) We suspect the Burmese authorities opened up today's session of the trial to quiet the growing tide of international pressure and perhaps also to ensure the outside world is aware of Yettaw's bizarre motivations and the lack of any connection between him and the regime. Today's testimony, which for the first time addressed Yettaw's "visions," should quell speculation that Yettaw is a

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pawn used by the regime to manufacture an incident to charge and jail ASSK. The regime's decision to allow select diplomats to meet with ASSK -- to our knowledge the first such opportunity since 2003, with the exception of visits with UN envoys -- is more surprising. We suggest any press statement acknowledge this gesture while stressing our ongoing core concerns.
DINGER